

ADDICTION RECOVERY » A HEALTH CARE ISSUE



INCLUDING PEER RECOVERY SUPPORT SERVICES IN STATES' ESSENTIAL HEALTH BENEFITS

The Recovery Bill of Rights [facesandvoicesofrecovery.org/pdf/Advocacy_Toolkit/RBOR_legal.pdf] affirms that everyone seeking or in recovery from addiction deserves access to a diverse range of services and supports to get and stay well. This range needs to include peer recovery support services (PRSS) — as well as treatment and other support — as components of care that will be readily available when people need them and will be reimbursable to service providers.

Recovery advocates can work with allies in their states, to help ensure that critical peer recovery support services will be included as part of their state's Essential Health Benefits.

What are Essential Health Benefits?

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) requires states to set up what are called state health insurance exchanges. The exchanges will act like marketplaces, where each person can choose a plan that suits them. Through these exchanges, states must offer a core of what are called essential health benefits (EHB). These are the services that will be reimbursed or covered by the new exchanges. Services for mental and substance use disorders must be included. However, it's up to each state to decide what specific services will be offered.

As states are deciding what their EHB will look like, they will be looking at a range of services, including peer recovery support services. If they are included in the EHB, people will have access to these critical services and they will be covered by insurance or Medicaid. Also, organizations that provide PRSS will be reimbursed for providing those services.

¹ Emrick, C.D., Lassen, C.L. & Edwards, M.T. (1978). Nonprofessional peers as therapeutic agents. In A. Gurman & A. Razin (Eds), *Effective psychotherapy: A handbook of research*. New York: Pergamon.

² Godley, M.D., & Godley, S.H. (in press). Continuing care following residential treatment: History, current practice, critical issues, and emerging approaches. In Jainchill, N. (ed.), *Understanding and treating adolescent substance use disorders*. Kingston, NJ: Civic Research Institute.

³ Faces & Voices of Recovery (2010). Addiction recovery peer service roles: recovery management in health reform. Accessed October 25, 2012 from: http://www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org/publications/eneews/2010-09-23/9.11.10_PRSS_health_reform_final.pdf

⁴ Hill, T., McDaid, C., Taylor, P. (2012) Peer recovery support services: evolving community-based practices and infrastructure. Presented to the Betty Ford Institute Annual Conference on Recovery.

⁵ Jason, L.A., Davis, M.I., & Ferrari, J.R. (2007). The need for substance abuse after-care: Longitudinal analysis of Oxford House. *Addiction Behaviors*, 32, 803-818.

⁶ Gulf Coast ATTC (2007). Interim evaluation report: creating access to recovery through drug courts. Texas Department of State Health Services Community Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services Section.

⁷ McKay, J.R., Lynch, K., Shepard, D., Pettinati, H. (2005). The Effectiveness of Telephone Based Continuing Care for Alcohol and Cocaine Dependence: 24 Month Outcomes. *Archives of General Psychiatry*. 62 (199-207).

What are Peer Recovery Support Services and How Do They Help People Get Better?

Peer recovery support services are delivered by individuals who have "lived experience" with addiction and recovery. They are non-clinical services that help people achieve long-term recovery from addiction.

They help people initiate and maintain recovery and enhance their quality of life by:

- Improving health and wellness
- Building recovery capital (internal and external supports that reinforce recovery)
- Helping individuals play an active role in managing their own recovery from addiction
- Improving health and recovery outcomes in diverse communities
- Reducing relapse rates
- Lifting barriers and increasing access to medical and other supportive services
- Reducing the onset, duration, and intensity of symptoms associated with severe addiction in adults and at-risk children and adolescents

What Is the Evidence Base for Peer Recovery Support Services?

Scientific evidence is growing in support of the beneficial effects of peer recovery support services and health outcomes that help people manage their recovery from addiction and other health conditions. Key studies include the following:

- Individuals receiving recovery support services have enhanced long-term recovery outcomes, increased physical/emotional/social/spiritual functioning, and reduced health care and societal costs ^{1,2,3,4}
- Individuals receiving a combination of clinical treatment and recovery supports have had improved recovery outcomes ^{5,6,7}



WHAT TYPES OF PEER RECOVERY SUPPORT SERVICES SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN STATE ESSENTIAL HEALTH BENEFITS PACKAGES?

There are a number of peer recovery support services. They include:

- Assertive community outreach services to identify, enroll, and engage individuals in recovery
- Screening (including brief screening and interventions) in all settings for substance use and mental disorders (children, adolescents, and adults)
- Peer-led recovery coaching (individual, group and family)
- Telephone/internet recovery supports
- Recovery community centers
- Direct linkages to supportive services, including culturally-appropriate communities of recovery
- Recovery housing

A ROLE FOR RECOVERY ADVOCATES

It is not too late to advocate for the inclusion of peer recovery support services as part of the EHB package. Here are some things that you or your organization can do:

- Find out what statewide health advocacy groups and coalitions you or your organization can join.
- Educate other health reform advocates about recovery from addiction and the importance of including peer recovery support services in the EHB package.
- Contact your Single State Authority (SSA) [<http://www.samhsa.gov/Grants/ssadirectory.pdf>]. Ask them to include peer recovery support services in their recommendations of services for the state EHB packages.
- Ask your SSA to facilitate an introduction with the people and agencies in your state that are directly responsible for the EHB package, so that your organization can have a voice in the decision-making process.

For more information on including peer recovery support services in your state's EHB, please contact us at info@facesandvoicesofrecovery.org. ■



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